

## SCOTLAND.

## A SKETCH OF HER HISTORY.

THE STORY OF SCOTLAND, from the Earliest Times to the Present Century. By John Mackintosh, LL. D. 12mo, pp. xxii. 336. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Dr. Mackintosh has in this volume of the "Story of the Nations" series aimed at giving a succinct and intelligible sketch of Scottish history, and he has performed his task with judgment and a due sense of proportion. What he has done in these pages, however, is but to indicate the main course of the story of Scotland. Within the prescribed limits no more was possible, and those who desire to find explanation of the paradoxes of Scotch history must go elsewhere for light and suggestion. There are indeed some salient points which Dr. Mackintosh might have brought out more strongly than he has done; and there is one momentous element in Scotch history to which he makes scarce any reference, though without knowledge of it any true understanding of the facts is impossible. The turbulent and inchoate period of Scotch evolution was protracted by external and internal agencies in turn, but it is only when the thirteenth century is reached that the influences which so disastrously retarded national coherence and progress come into play most formidably. If the municipal system was wanting in this and the following century; if when the kings of Scotland should have been able to fall back upon the burghs for aid in withstanding the encroachments of the feudal nobility, the vigorous middle class was only conspicuous by its absence, the fact must be attributed to those constant and merciless English raids which, conducted by the Edwards and the second Richard, kept the southern Lowlands for generations in a state of desolation, arrested every forward movement on the part of Scotch industry, drove the natural builders of towns and trade into nomadic life, and at the same time exposed them to the oppression of the Highland chiefs and the rapacity of the nobles.

The ferocity and sustained savagery of the English invasions, the despair and consequent helplessness they engendered, and the enormous destruction of capital they entailed, not only impoverished and degraded the Scotch, but made them the easy prey of superstitions which for three centuries pressed heavily and darkly upon the national spirit. From the fifteenth to the sixteenth century those superstitions exercised a sixteen influence upon Scotch life, politics, theology and general progress. They were themselves colored by the conditions amid which the people lived. The prevailing anarchy of a populous ground between perpetually contending factions and exposed not less continually to peril to life and means caused ignorance to be universal; and the credulity born of this ignorance was deeply and darkly tintured by the dismal experiences common to the whole nation. It has been well pointed out that the difference between the witchcraft manifestations in England and Scotland conclusively denotes the character of the social conditions of the two countries. The English witch was a poor and never powerful creature, rather ridiculous than alarming, easily overcome, and curiously liable to be betrayed or deserted by her supposed demoniac allies. The Scottish witch and warlock, on the other hand, were raised by the inflamed imaginations of a deeply suffering people to the position of powerful sorcerers, whose magic arts could compass the most flagitious deeds, and who often were able to defy their enemies and even to set at naught the terrors of the church.

It followed inevitably that as in Scotland the popular superstitions were deeper and darker than across the border, so the methods of dealing with the supposed black arts were crueler. There was a time when in Scotland the methods and ethics of the Spanish Inquisition were closely followed in the attempt to extirpate witchcraft and sorcery; when those methods spread abroad so general an apprehension that neighbors shrank from one another, members of the same families learned mutual distrust, and to be "suspect" was as fatal as during the Reign of Terror in France. The rise of the Reformation did not mitigate these horrors. The church, whether Catholic or Reformed, held the same views regarding witchcraft and employed the same means in dealing with its imagined manifestations. It is open to speculative minds to indulge the fancy that the element of sombreness and sternness which even to this day belongs to the Scotch character, may have been, if not implanted during these centuries of fear and agony, at least strengthened and increased by such dire and prolonged experiences. The making of Scotland, stern and wild," presented in her secret a fitting frame for a fierce struggle between a harassed and oppressed people and the double assaults which beset them—on the one hand, only too real attacks from foes within and without; on the other hand, not less terrifying onslaught from the powers of the air.

The absence of large cities and of a middle class, and the lack consequently of social organization, favored the persistence of superstition and hindered intellectual growth. Only the indomitable spirit of the people, always resolute to maintain their independence, no matter at what sacrifice and sufferings, prevented such a national collapse as befell Spain; this and the perennial warfare between the Church and the nobles, which in the long run prevented either of those powers from attaining the supremacy. The accession of James to the throne of England marked the beginning of the final decline of the Scotch nobility, but the Church did not share in this decadence, for it had struck its roots deep in the popular heart. The Union, which was bitterly opposed by a large proportion of the Scotch people, was the measure which nevertheless brought peace and security to the long distressed country, and afforded opportunity for the development of commerce, industry, and all those modern agencies which make so powerfully for civilization. On this question Dr. Mackintosh observes: "Looking at the Union as means to an end, we find it had a vast effect on the welfare of the people. At once it greatly widened the field of commercial enterprise to the Scots, and directly tended to afford them more security in every quarter of the globe. The Scots always had a fund of energy and ample power of endurance, but external obstacles had long retarded their progress and crippled their best efforts." In truth the obstacles were both internal and external, and this any historical survey, including that before us, at once demonstrates. But as Dr. Mackintosh observes: "When the nation was placed under more favorable conditions by the Union, the people advanced rapidly in wealth and civilization."

It appears to him also "that the Union afforded great and inestimable moral advantages to Scotland. And the records of the last hundred years show that Scotsmen have fully appreciated and enjoyed these advantages." At first there was a disposition to give the Scotch something less than fair play. A strong leaven of dislike still remained in English minds for the people north of the Tweed; a survival, doubtless, of the old feeling of natural hatred toward those who had excelled it by suffering every wrong and outrage at English hands. The Spaniard in the story who killed a man because he hated him, and confessed that he hated his victim because he had injured him, is a true type of unregenerate human nature. Happily all the bitterness has long passed away. Scotland, once free to grow and learn, has shown her inherent capacity and soundness of constitution by rising with unprecedented rapidity in every direction; and her dark and bloody story is now referred to only for the lessons it contains, and the proofs it affords of the impossibility of crushing or destroying a people so robustly virile, so steadfast of purpose, so thrifty and so keen of wit.

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